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GROWTH MANAGEMENT ISSUES: A LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK

HARRY A. JOHNSTON, II†

Thank you for that warm introduction. It is a pleasure to be here among a group representing so many varied interests, and to realize that, at last, we have the common purpose of managing Florida's megagrowth.

I see by the agenda that your luncheon speaker is supposed to be the Senate President, and I do plan to focus the second part of my talk on the growth management agenda for my administration. But first I would like to talk with you, not from a lawmaker's perspective, but as a fifth-generation Floridian who loves this state and who is worried about the human costs of growth in this state.

Florida has been good to my family. My great-great-grandparents came to Quincy from North Carolina more than a century ago — before Coca-Cola, James Harold Thompson, and Sandy D'Alemberte made Quincy famous! There have been two major family relocations since then, to Jacksonville around the turn of the century and to West Palm Beach before I was born. For us, the dream of a better life that propels so many newcomers to the Sunshine State has, in fact, come true.

In my lifetime, Florida's population has climbed from twenty-seventh nationally to sixth. By the turn of the next century, we should reach third. People have poured into Florida as pioneers, pilgrims, and occasionally profiteers, hoping that a new land would mean a new tomorrow. But not all have been as fortunate as the Johnstons. Many have become Floridians in street address only, never truly a part of the community here.

Ironically, the whole community pays the price of their isolation. Rapid unassimilated growth, which brings as many as 5000 newcomers a week to the state, also brings such negative social conditions as crime, racial conflict, and environmental degradation, according to the *National Journal* columnist Neal Peirce, who addressed a Senate seminar two weeks ago. "What has developed on the Florida peninsula," in Peirce's words, "is a deeply disjointed society, one that has yet to develop a coherent sense of itself and perhaps never will."

It is of little comfort to know that Florida is not unique among

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the so-called "hot growth" states in fighting psychological as well as environmental costs of rapid change. Yet, with Arizona, we are unique in that the bulk of our history has been spent during the most accelerated period of dislocating change in the world's history.

In his book, *Future Shock*, futurist Alvin Toffler divided human history into 800 lifetimes of sixty-two years apiece. Using his timeline we, the inhabitants of the 800th lifetime, can better understand the numbing acceleration of change:

The first 650 lifetimes, more than eighty percent of human history, were spent in caves. We were unable to communicate effectively from one generation to the next until writing was developed, just seventy lifetimes ago. Only during the last four lifetimes, the last two percent of history, have we been able to measure time with any precision. Just three lifetimes ago, there was no electric motor. In fact, it is within our own lifetime, the 800th, that the overwhelming majority of all material goods we use in daily life has been developed.

Our lifetime marks a sharp break with all past human experience. Economists and historians tell us that persons who turn sixty this year were born, in a sense, at the midpoint of history. The world today is as different from the world into which you were born as that world was from the world of Julius Caesar.

C.P. Snow, the novelist and scientist, once noted that, until this century, social change was so slow that it would pass unnoticed in one person's lifetime. This is no longer true. The rate of change has increased until neither our imaginations nor our sense of belonging can keep pace.

Perhaps for this reason, we too often become adversaries, deadlocked in bitter competition for resources, willing to gamble away an uncertain tomorrow for a sense of certainty about today. On this environmentally fragile piece of real estate, such conflict can become mortal, if not for the human spirit, then for the air, the land, and the water that sustain us. Overcoming the personal divisions to save this one thing we share, our environment, has not been easy. Our growth management accomplishments, as John DeGrove points out in his new book *Land, Growth and Politics* have come only after considerable political controversy.

Nevertheless, we have in place a series of critical foundation pieces passed into law over the last dozen years protecting areas of critical state concern, attempting to assure the continued quality and quantity of water resources, requiring a commitment to plan-

ning by all levels of government, and recognizing the need for regional cooperation in protecting natural resources and guiding development. But these building blocks cannot carry us even through this decade. Florida will grow at a rate twice that of other Sunbelt states and more than three times that of the country as a whole. We can no longer continue to delay the hard decisions that will more wisely guide future growth.

Responsible legislative actions during my administration will not equate growth management with "no growth" or "growth as usual" or even "slow growth." It will create neither the purist's unpopulated dreamworld nor the makings of a speculator's paradise. We must construct a realistic yet demanding blueprint that will recognize the inevitability of growth while requiring and enabling it to carry its own weight — growth that will add to, rather than detract from, the existing quality of life in Florida.

Under my leadership, the Senate will take steps to avoid Governor Graham's recent grim prediction that, if we make enough bad decisions about the use of our natural resources, "we could actually create a desert — a desert atop an aquifer of polluted water, and ringed by oceans of salt water."

We shall begin with review of the proposed state comprehensive plan. A number of Senate committees will work with the Governor and Cabinet to develop a strategic vision for Florida's future. Our legislative responsibilities to state planning will not end after this session: I shall expect the Senate appropriations and substantive committees to begin linking their bills, budgets, and agency reviews to the framework of the state plan outlined this year.

But the plan will be a general guide for shaping the future; it cannot specifically address today's pressing growth-management mandates. Therefore, a second portion of my administration's agenda will speak to the crisis of the coasts, to the unanticipated but now glaringly apparent inadequacies of the DRI process, and to the disintegration of Florida's infrastructure.

Good intentions will not be enough to manage Florida's megagrowth. Only good implementation will satisfy us. Therefore, I will request three Senate committees — Natural Resources, chaired by Senator George Stuart; Economic, Community and Consumer Affairs, chaired by Senator Pat Frank; and Appropriations, chaired by Senator Pat Neal — not only to give substantive legislative direction, but also to make adequate finances available and to put in place sufficient enforcement powers at state and local levels. In the long run, excellence may be expensive, but mediocrity

would be exorbitant.

Finally, the definition of growth management will not be limited to environmental and building issues alone. The future Florida must be fit for our people as well. Therefore, other key components of my agenda will include economic development issues, such as career training and retraining in our state's universities and community colleges; a package of legislation that will recognize aging as a societal condition rather than merely a matter of health care delivery; protective measures to assure that our children have reason to look on the future with optimism; and fine arts programs to express and enrich our spirits.

Some of you may question whether this legislative agenda is utopian rather than practical, just one more set of Florida pipe dreams doomed to failure.

I say that this is a legislative package whose time has come. Exactly half of the Florida Senate today is native-born; the other twenty are committed to the generations beyond their first generation. We know ourselves to be Floridians, and we are determined that this state will survive us and survive us well. No longer will the Senate sound the death knell for growth management proposals. We expect to work in close cooperation with the House, the Governor, the executive agencies, and with you to bring these dreams into reality.

Behind us are the voices of the state's citizens. By a six-to-one margin, Floridians recently told poll-takers from Florida Atlantic University that they will do without economic growth and development if it jeopardizes our environmental quality. This need not be an either-or option, however. We can reconcile our needs for both a healthy environment and a healthy economy — but only if we act now, while there is time for strategic planning and while there is at last coalition.

This conference represents the crystallization of opinion behind growth management legislation as planners, developers, environmentalists, business people, academics, and state and local officials come together to discuss a shared vision for tomorrow.

For too long, we have been at one another's throats. We must not allow our differences to defeat the crucial endeavor to manage Florida's megagrowth. The fragile nature of our environment, the need for a clean and resilient economy and, above all, our moral obligations to future generations make timely vision and prompt action imperative. I look forward to having you as allies in the two years ahead.